

TESTIMONY OF JOHN D. MARKS BEFORE THE SENATE SELECT
COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE -- HEARINGS ON THE
NOMINATION OF ADMIRAL STANFIELD TURNER AS DIRECTOR
OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE, FEBRUARY 22, 1977.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you as a citizen with strong feelings about intelligence and covert operations. I come with some background knowledge on these matters, as the co-author with Victor Marchetti of the book, The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence, as a frequent writer in the field, and as Director of the CIA Project at the Center for National Security Studies in Washington.

Although I am not taking a position on whether or not Admiral Turner should be approved, I urge you to take advantage of the confirmation process to insure, in advance, that the abuses of the past will not be repeated. If the CIA continues to be marked by scandal and wrongdoing under the new DCI, this committee will not be able to "plausibly deny" its share of the blame.

In my view, the committee should make clear to the DCI that his first priority must be to supply the country with the best possible intelligence on what is happening in the world. While the concept of "national security" has been misused in recent years to cover-up official misconduct, the CIA's critics -- of which I am one -- accept that it is vital to the country's security that we know about such matters as Soviet missile strength, Chinese nuclear testing, and world food shortages.

US intelligence agencies have suffered huge breakdowns in the past -- failing to predict the Tet offensive in Vietnam, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Yom Kippur war, etc. While nobody's perfect, this committee should insist that the intelligence community under Admiral Turner make better use of the \$6 to \$10 billion of the taxpayer's money it spends each year.

The recent controversy over the CIA's estimate of Soviet military strength is a case in point. This assessment will determine to some extent our national priorities in coming years, since if we sharply increase defense spending to meet a perceived Soviet threat, the money spent will not be available to meet other needs. Yet, so far at least, the information available to the Congress and the public -- who must ultimately make the key decisions -- is based on an intelligence process in which it is difficult to have full confidence. Whatever the merits of the particular arguments, there is no question that political, personal, and institutional biases all became factors in making the estimate.